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Frederiksen, Martin Demant; Pedersen, Susanne Højlund; Meinert, Lotte; Dalsgård, Anne Line

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Well-faring towards Uncertain Futures: A Comparative Perspective on Youth in Marginalized Positions

Susanne Højlund, Lotte Meinert,

Martin Demant Frederiksen, Anne Line Dalsgaard

ABSTRACT: The article explores how societal contexts create different possibilities for faring well towards the future for young marginalized people. Based on a comparative project including ethnographies from Brazil, Uganda, Georgia and Denmark the authors discuss well-faring as a time-oriented process based on individual as well as societal conditions. The article argues that in order to understand well-faring it is important to analyse how visions and strategies for the future are shaped in relation to local circumstances. Whether it is possible to envision the future as hopeless or hopeful, as concrete or abstract or as dependent on family or state is a matter of context. Well-faring is thus neither an individual nor a state project but must be analysed in a double perspective as an interplay between the two.

KEYWORDS: Brazil, Denmark, future, Georgia, marginalization, Uganda, welfare, well-faring, youth

Welfare is usually discussed and theorized in relation to states, their bureaucratic structures and statistics drawing upon certain quality indicators – giving us a ‘static’ view of the welfare situation in a population in a defined territory at a certain point in time. Complementary to this ‘territorial population quality snapshot’ perspective, examined most thoroughly by Foucault (2009), in this article we propose a framework for looking at the dynamics of ‘faring well’ as a process in time and lives. Ethnographically we explore how this proposed anthropological conceptualization of ‘well-faring’ can shed light on young marginalized people’s lives in four local settings in Brazil, Uganda, Georgia and Denmark. We use the term ‘marginalized’ as an expression

of having slim chances for accessing what is regarded locally to be ‘a good life’, acknowledging that when living on the margins of society (as described by Das and Poole 2004) the ‘faring through life’ is often associated with uncertainty and negative predictions about the future. The concept of ‘well-faring’ evokes the idea of an actor in a landscape moving towards something good. This obviously raises questions about how it is possible to aim towards the good and move well when your life chances seem shattered, and you are positioned on the edge of a society where hope and opportunities are scarce resources (Hage 2003). It is problematic, we argue, to theorize concepts of welfare and well-faring in general terms because they are inherently ideological

and normative notions related to specific local and political contexts. What we propose is an emic perspective of faring well taking into consideration how specific structural constraints and opportunities and discourses of what is considered 'good' influence this faring.

In his article 'The Capacity to Aspire' Appadurai (2004) discusses the possibilities for aspiration as a navigational competence related to a cultural map, a set of ideas or discourses, which guide actors towards (a more positive) future. We are inspired by this interpretation of agency as an orientation towards the future, but we wish to be careful about assuming that new 'aspirational' discourses create new possibilities. This is not always so. With such a focus, well-faring becomes a normative and normalizing project, as Edgar and Russell define it (1998: 1). We seek on the other hand to create a more descriptive approach taking the structural conditions seriously and at the same time ask for individual perspectives. This is done in order to understand how agency is not only influenced by discourses and societal structures, but also influenced by how people themselves produce visions of the future, which they use to navigate their lives. We thereby propose to interpret well-faring with a double lens: investigating the 'faring towards a good life' in relation to the societal context. With this double perspective¹ (Das 2004) on structural forces (including the state as an important regulator of those forces) and the future perspectives of people themselves, we seek to understand how societal ideas and young marginalized people's ideas of the future are interwoven and take effect.

This focus forms the background for a research project on Marginalized Youth and Futurity,² based on fieldwork in four vastly different countries. Each country study focuses on a small group of young people who are considered locally to be in marginal social positions, but who take an innovative approach to their own situation. Through participant observation, interviews and field conversations we

have followed the faring of these young people over time (two to three years), contextualizing events in their lives and choices they make in relation to their specific social and societal situations. The comparison between the fieldwork settings is inspired by Melhuus, who proposes a comparison of meanings and associations rather than objects and essences, since 'similarities and differences are not given in the things themselves, but in the way they are contextualized, i.e. in the relations in which they form a part' (Melhuus 2002: 82). Cross-cultural comparison has the ability to demonstrate differences as well as equalities (Holy 1987). In this respect we also use the comparative approach to seek for common features of what it means to fare well when being young and at the margins of society.

The four contexts we compare in this article are distinctly different, particularly so as regards the role of the state and questions of social security. Brazil represents one of the world's fastest growing economies, but is also one of the most unequal nations in terms of, for instance, health and education. Uganda is one of the world's poorest nations, marked by decades of civil wars and an ongoing AIDS epidemic. In northern Uganda the state has focused mainly on military security, leaving room for foreign donor programmes and NGOs to influence social development. Georgia is a young nation, which after 15 years of independence from the USSR remains marked by massive unemployment and political instability. The Danish welfare state is an apparent contrast, but despite state initiatives towards socially marginalized families, young people from this segment of society are facing uncertain futures with the risk of unemployment and lack of education. However, the differences between the empirical macro-contexts bring forth certain similarities in the way that ideas of the future and well-faring find expression, whether through individual mentorship, informal social networks, kinship structures or state-sponsored welfare programmes.

From an anthropological perspective, we take it as an empirical task to ask and find out what 'faring well' means in specific contexts: what constitutes the landscape (state, institutional structures, cultural expectations) and how does this landscape interact with the actor's movements? What is regarded as 'good' to move towards? What defines a 'movement'/a good change from an actor's perspective? How do imaginations of the future (political as well as personal) influence faring?

The following four empirical vignettes are written with the double perspective of society and individual in mind in order to stress the different structural conditions affecting these young people. We firstly present the state context with a 'static' focus on welfare; thereafter we give an account of one of our young informants, focusing on their actual situation and visions for the future. With these four examples we want to highlight the many different nuances of what it means to strive for well-faring. This is done in order to discuss how well-faring can be seen as a relational process in which time plays a central role. Striving for a 'good' fare through life is never an individual project, but takes form in a complex social context where state, civil society, family and friends contribute to the ongoing creation of different routes towards an imagined future. As such, the concept well-faring has to be interpreted not as a descriptive concept of *what* constitutes the good life, but as a concept set in use to unfold *how* people strive for a good faring through life. With this approach it becomes clear that the faring through life both constitutes and is constituted by different interpretations of time – especially the future.

Faring towards 'Well' in Northeast Brazil

A stable and promising life is not immediately within reach for a large part of the Brazilian

population. Unemployment, unstable family structures, health problems due to malnutrition (including diabetes and cardiovascular diseases) and disillusionment are major threats to well-faring. In addition, Brazil is a consumer society, with all that this implies for the poor, including a sense of exclusion from the 'exciting' life (Bauman 1998). The limited capacity among low-income families to participate in consumption mirrors the lack of access to proper health facilities and to education, which is evident in national statistics. People's expectations vis-à-vis the state are equally low and, despite changed political rhetoric and an emphasis on citizenship (*cidadania*) in schools and vocational training programmes for young people, a large number of Brazilians still do not see themselves as citizens with lawful access to rights and duties in society. As former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (2009) recently said, 'We don't have the sense that we are all equal under the law. This is a problem of culture, which is much harder to change than government.' Moreover, as paradoxical as it may seem, loneliness is a problem in the lively neighbourhoods of low-income Brazil mainly due to gossip and lack of trust in friends and neighbours. The high number of violent deaths among young men and the still worrying rates of teenage pregnancy are figures that speak their own language about the difficulties that especially young people face in these circumstances.

Hope is not a rare phenomenon among Recife's youth (Wildermuth and Dalsgaard 2006; Dalsgaard et al. 2008), but well-based hope certainly is, even though today more possibilities are opening up for young people in low-income Brazil. Since President Lula da Silva took office in 2003 the social welfare system has been massively improved. The Bolsa Família (Family Grant), which provides financial aid to poor Brazilian families on the condition that their children attend school and are vaccinated, is now the largest conditional cash transfer programme in the world, reaching

24 per cent of the Brazilian population (Hall 2008). Along with this and other social benefits, access to university education has been improved for young people from poor families. And Lula himself, the first working-class president, has demonstrated that also the poor have a right to be 'someone in life'.

The idea of faring well in Recife's low-income neighbourhoods (where this research project has been carried out) is influenced by traditional values of respectability, decency and cordiality. But more and more it is also dominated by notions of economic improvement and individual achievement through education and professional engagement in society. Lack of information technology (IT) and English competencies is still a hindrance for inclusion in the labour market and especially young people are very aware of this. Middle-class youth often do private extra courses in English in their free time, while youth with less economic support suffer the ordinary school teaching, where English is read but rarely spoken (and, if so, with Portuguese pronunciation). Connection to global development is thus a concrete question of family economy. However, while in the 1990s higher education was almost out of the question for the poorer segment of young people, today it is less a question of absolute exclusion, as it is a matter of knowing how to use new possibilities. A crucial element of faring well in Recife's low-income areas is thus having a relation to someone who knows how to employ the opportunities offered by the state.

Crime and violence could have been Leo's fate had he not met Wellington. Leo lives in the metropolitan area of Recife, northeast Brazil, in a typical low-income neighbourhood, controlled by local bandits and with few positive role models for young people. At the time Leo and Wellington met, Leo was already well into 'bad things' like smoking marihuana, skipping school and repeating classes. Leo's mother was worried but unable to change his pattern. She contacted Wellington, who is a very engaged teacher at the local school. At that time Wel-

lington had already gathered around him a small group of young men, in which Leo was now included. They are a closed group, Leo explains, with a strong friendship – not the kind of 'friends' you can't trust when you need help or who never ask how you are but only criticize you behind your back. In Wellington's group Leo has learned that life can be different or, as he says, that you can study and use your head, not fill it with drugs and gossip. Leo now reads books; in fact, he has a bookshelf, a rare thing in the neighbourhood, just next to his bed. Having finished school recently, he has entered the army and is getting an education in administration there. Leo considers himself lucky, as entering the army even as a conscript is not easy. His papers from the military will help him progress in life, he hopes.

Leo left his former life '*por forza de vontade propria*' – by his own will, he says. By saying so he plugs into a discourse promoted by both state and evangelical churches that emphasizes individual agency and ambition. But he emphasizes the trust of the group and how he admires Wellington, who is cordial and helps people while striving for his own aims in life. For Leo, this is a promise: if he imitates Wellington he too may reach his objectives. The promise exemplified by Wellington is what keeps Leo going, not only towards the life of a respectable person, but also in a respectable manner here and now. Seen through the prism of Leo, the capacity to fare well is thus not only a culturally produced capacity to aspire (Appadurai 2004), but also a practice transferred directly from person to person.

Faring with a Family in Northern Uganda

In Uganda concern about 'faring well' through life has been, and still is, closely and mainly connected to ideas and practices of kinship. Families and clans are the main structures and driving forces in helping, guiding and directing

members and in securing and trying to create possibilities, as well as limitations, for members as they pass through the various phases of their lives. To give a few examples of different phases of life where kin play a prominent role: child care and socialization are generally done in a family context, and while schools may be run by the state or private organizations, parents (families) are the main promoters in getting children through school, paying school fees and paying for uniforms and books. Going to the hospital without family members will seldom result in actual treatment: a patient needs to come with a family member who will care for them, buy medicine and engage a doctor. Getting a job is much easier if the applicant knows a family or clan member in the organization to which they apply. In order to get married the couple needs the blessings of their two respective clans, as well as the bride wealth from the groom's family. The father or uncles are also supposed to give the groom a piece of land to build on and farm. Other principles of social organization such as patron-client relationships between richer and poorer sections of society also play a role in people's abilities and possibilities to fare well through life, and these are often entangled with kinship as well. 'Technical-know-who' is a colloquial Ugandan-English term used to denote the importance of social networks as resources for success in any kind of institution or system, such as hospitals, schools and employment (Whyte et al., forthcoming).

In relation to welfare, the state in Uganda has been rather unstable so far. Through structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s and 1990s the Ugandan government was forced to cut down on state expenses in all sectors, leaving the military, some primary schools and empty administration buildings as the few visible signs of a state in most of the country's rural communities (Jones 2009). Welfare is thus a relatively new concept in Ugandan political discourse. However, it is beginning to pop up in development programme descriptions,

closely related to bilateral and international donors and NGOs. This has led to what we might term a 'projectification' of welfare in which specific projects focus on a specific population group with a specific problem (e.g. AIDS orphans, war widows or landmine survivors) rather than a 'generalized' welfare system where the state/family/clan supports the faring of people through life irrespective of the kinds of problems the individual encounters. In these specific welfare programmes various projections of the future become obvious. However, some people do not fit into any of the categories and some do not connect to the future visions of these projects.

Abola is a young man who lives in northern Uganda, a region enjoying relative peace after 22 years of civil strife. During the conflict people were forced to live in refugee camps, apparently as protection against abduction and rebel attacks. Recently the refugee camps were dissolved and the population was forced to leave the camps and semi-urban areas and return to their original rural homes. The World Food Programme used to distribute food rations to families, but now families have to sustain themselves through subsistence agriculture or find other means of survival. More than 80 per cent of the people have gone back and established new homes on the old clan land. However, some people have stayed behind in the former refugee camps because they benefit from specific 'welfare programmes': AIDS medication, mine-survivor support, ex-child-soldier education. Other people – like Abola, who does not fit into any of these programmes – stay behind because they do not have kinship-based access to the land and/or do not consider the projected futures in the rural areas attractive. They hang around town and the semi-urban areas of the camps hoping for other kinds of future possibilities.

Abola lost his parents during the war, before his father managed to show him the piece of land he was supposed to inherit and farm. Traditionally, Abola would then ask his uncles

to give him a piece of land, but he hesitates to do so for fear of a conflict with the uncles and because he does not see himself as a future rural farmer. Abola went through secondary school, paid by his father, with good results, and now he would like to study law, but cannot afford the university fees. Instead he is trying to subsist by doing odd computer jobs and writing and recording music. He is hoping that 'one of these NGOs' will start a project he can benefit from, but he does not fit into the categories that the NGOs work with or towards, so he feels 'stuck'. Abola has a girlfriend – Lucy – who is pregnant with their child. Lucy's family is expecting bride wealth from Abola and his family, but Abola finds it impossible to raise the bride wealth without support from his uncles.

Abola's uncles, who belong to the older generation in northern Uganda perceive the younger generation to be on a 'wrong track', saying 'they are lazy, they do not want to work hard, and they do not want to go back to the rural areas and farm the land', which is where the older generations perceive the future possibilities for welfare to be. In this context, when kinship-based welfare fails – or is not wanted – and aid projects do not fit the specific problems people experience and do not 'project' the kinds of futures people envision for themselves, few options seem to be available for well-faring other than, as Abola himself says, struggling for oneself and hoping for 'the new'.

When 'Well' is a Question of Masculinity in Georgia

In the wake of the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003 the notions of 'hope' and 'the future' became part of the national agenda and political rhetoric. After well over a decade of post-Soviet turmoil, the atmosphere in the country was one of extreme disillusionment. When Mikhail Saakashvili came to power after the

revolution it was with grand promises of change and of the nation as a whole faring well towards the future. These promises were to be made real through a series of institutional reforms as well as reconstructions of urban spaces in many of the country's major cities. The coastal city of Batumi was targeted as one of the cities to be reconstructed and thereby become an image of the country's move towards the future. In 2008 grand government building projects could be seen everywhere in the city centre. Most prominent were the so-called French fountains: illuminated cascades of 'dancing' water accompanied by loud music. The fountains were built by president Saakashvili as part of a general renovation of the city centre initiated to boost tourism. Millions were spent on these and other projects, described by the government as signs of progress: visual reminders of the 'bright future' that lay ahead of the country in the wake of the revolution (Le Moulec 2010). Whereas institutional and monetary support for the faring well of individual citizens in terms of, for instance, school fees, grants for higher education and unemployment benefits were few if not non-existent, symbolic representations of the faring well of the nation were abundant.

In August 2008, as the tourist season was about to start, war against Russia broke out. Vanya, a 20-year-old man, worked in one of the beach cafés that, like most others, was on the verge of closing down due to the war. The mood in the bar was sad; everyone faced losing their jobs within days with little possibility of finding another job. Vanya was supposed to have gone to Moscow, where his older brother lives, to study. But because of the war he had not been able to get a visa, and he was not sure what to do. When asked what his plans were his answer was angry: 'I don't know! I don't know what I will do.' His mother being his only relative in Batumi, most of Vanya's life centred around his friends and the social groups locally known as *dzmak'atcebi*, literally 'brother-men' but referred to here as brother-

hoods. These consisted in groupings of three to four young men who regarded each other as a kind of family and who helped each other with everyday matters such as obtaining small loans, getting part-time jobs, contacting girls, and being of assistance whenever needed. Being part of a brotherhood meant knowing one another's problems and always being ready to help solve them even if this created problems for oneself – basically supporting one another in all respects (Frederiksen, forthcoming). In this sense, brotherhoods were a kind of social safety net and an arena in which young men tried to establish themselves as 'good men'. Being a 'good man' who was able to provide for his family was a key marker of faring well through life for Vanya and many of his friends. Such notions of 'a good life' were seemingly mundane but extremely difficult to achieve.

Vanya's annoyance and anger towards questions about the future was in stark contrast to the governmental rhetoric of 'hope'. Even at the height of war the president repeatedly asserted that the country was on the right path. Vanya's discontent with questions concerning the future was not just a result of the war and the situation it had created. As months went by it became clear that the pessimism and uneasiness Vanya and his friends (equally unemployed and with little or no education) expressed about the future went deeper than the aftermaths of war. This became particularly clear when walking near the dancing fountains. Vanya spoke of them in highly negative terms and was often reluctant to even stop and look at them. Although the fountains were supposed to symbolize a bright future for the country, it was not a future that Vanya believed himself to be a part of. The president's national project seemed to be one that did not include him. For large parts of the population, including Vanya and his friends, unemployment and social insecurity remained a significant part of everyday life, making faring well through life just as troublesome following the revolution as it had been before (Frederiksen 2006). As Eliza-

beth Dunn has noted, although the government of Saakashvili attempted to reform society, the state remained withdrawn from certain parts of social space. This, Dunn writes, happened not because the Georgian state was adhering to neoliberal principles of self-regulation, but rather because the state lost its capacity to order and regulate people and things (2008: 244). Hence, while the post-revolution state projects colonized some spaces in Georgian social life (Koch 2006), other places remain 'uncolonized, unpenetrated and largely abandoned' (Dunn 2008: 253). Despite multi-million-dollar development projects, large-scale social problems were yet to be addressed (*ibid.*: 254; Manning 2007: 202).

Unemployment rates in the region were staggering and prospects few at the time. Vanya and his peers were in a strange position in which they received little help from any external sources. They were not eligible to enter state-sponsored programmes of financial aid and they did not have enough money to enter the educational system. And although they were poor, they were not poor enough to receive assistance from the numerous international and local NGOs working in the country, since these primarily focused their activities on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and vulnerable women. Further, although family relations are fundamental in the country, these young men came from backgrounds where this kind of help and assistance was limited, mainly due to fathers who were either alcoholic, had emigrated or had passed away.

In some sense it would be obvious to assume that they were on their own when it came to faring well through life and upholding and creating viable presents and futures as 'good men'. This was not the case, however, as much of their daily activities evolved around their engagement in their brotherhoods. Establishing oneself as a good man, for instance, was intimately bound to the socialities created via brotherhoods. Although brotherhoods were a social safety net in many respects, they were

not a guarantee for not ending up in jail or succumbing to drug abuse. Nevertheless, the brotherhoods served as a way of faring well through life in a situation where it was not believed that the state could assist in this process.

Struggling with a Well-meaning State in Denmark

Welfare is a highly political word in Denmark. The state is often identified as a welfare state and every Dane is familiar with the word welfare. In some way or another, elections in the country always include a question of how 'welfare' should be organized, changed, maintained or reduced. Both left-wing and right-wing politicians argue for political changes related to questions of welfare, and neither of the parties would dare to discard the idea of a rather strong welfare state.

The Danish way of organizing welfare for Danish citizens is historically based on a social democratic model (Einhorn and Logue 2003: 8) in which taxes play a central role as the basis for redistribution. What is known as the Scandinavian model represents a radical expansion of the public sector through the highly developed system of transfer payment, meaning that people with high incomes also pay more in taxes. The redistribution system is based on universalistic principles placing very few restrictions on who can receive support from the state. Gullestad (1992) has pointed to the typical Nordic value of equality which the welfare model reflects: in general, the state does not distinguish between rich and poor when providing support for its citizens: nobody pays for visits to the doctor or for treatment at hospital, everyone is eligible to receive economic support for education, all families receive a quarterly subsidy for each child under 18, and the state ensures a minimum of pension coverage for everyone over the age of 67.

One of the consequences of the Danish welfare model is thus a strong public sector

with institutions serving people from the cradle to the grave. Not only does the institutional system function as a security net, but it also ensures a big, healthy and well-educated workforce – and thereby contributes towards maintaining a stable base of taxpayers. Perhaps because of the many possibilities for public childcare, Danish women are among the most well-represented in the workforce in the world.

As a result of the many institutions, Denmark has produced a significant amount of knowledge about marginalized groups and people in need. Social workers, teachers and health-care professionals are part of a growing academic field producing public moral discourses and ideologies of the good life, pedagogy and health (see also Gulløv, this volume). A key issue in the professional discussions of the institutional system is how to avoid negative social heritage and how to support marginalized people in breaking the circles of deprivation. The institutional responsibility for well-faring is significantly related to ideas on integration, equality and inclusion (Højlund 2011), and the means for this is a good education and a job. Thus, the welfare system has faring well as an implicit goal, and children and youth are two key target groups for this goal.

'You can't know whether you've broken the circle of deprivation before you're lying in your coffin.' This rather unsentimental statement was uttered by Simon, a young Danish man who, in spite of all predictions to the contrary, is doing well today. Simon had alcoholic parents and many family conflicts during his childhood, and as a result he was removed from his biological family by the authorities and placed in various institutions and foster-care families. He is one of the success stories of the welfare system, which, in spite of many efforts to develop pedagogical programmes to prevent marginalization, cannot solve the problems of social deprivation (Egelund 2008). Many of these vulnerable young people are at risk of not getting an education or a job and are

seen as candidates for inheriting their parents' alcohol problems and becoming criminals, drug abusers and (too) young parents. But not Simon: he has an academic degree, a good job and a girlfriend, and he lives in a nice flat. From the perspective of the Danish welfare state, this young man is considered a 'pattern breaker' (to borrow a Danish term). He does not fulfil the common predictions for young people with his background. The welfare state sees Simon as an example of success, as an indication that the project of steering misguided families on the right track has reached its goal: he has broken with a detrimental social pattern and is therefore able to live 'the good life'. Having reached the goal of integration and normality, he is not a target for intervention or support any longer. The sudden lacking support from the welfare state has, however, been an important political issue for Simon, and for several years he has been engaged in building up an organization for young people in children's homes. He has contributed to publishing books, web pages and music about children and youth with problematic family backgrounds, he has been interviewed in different media, and he has cooperated with politicians in order to shed light on this category and especially on the period after placement in an institution.

In Simon's view, 'pattern breaker' is not a useful concept for living. With his background the future is and will always be uncertain, even if everything in the present indicates that he is living 'the good life' in a secure welfare state. The welfare state designs routes and maps for its citizens on the basis of ideologies of the good life. It makes it possible to predict the future, but only to a certain degree. The Danish welfare state gives considerable support to families, children and youth to help them become self-supporting, independent, and fully-fledged members of the workforce. Once a person has reached adulthood, received an education and obtained employment, the state withdraws and shows less interest in the indi-

vidual. Being able to integrate in this manner into the Danish society represents the public version of what it means to fare well. From the perspective of the individual – in this case a young man having experienced several emotional traumas – the map reaches further into the future. The risk of more trauma is always very close at hand, and therefore deciding whether or not one is faring well on one's life route can only be measured in retrospect.

Discussion

'The future' is a prominent and sometimes tired political concept and instrument worldwide. We probably all recognize political election rhetoric about hope, development and innovation as ways to evoke our imaginations of better futures. The 'future' is a political buzz-word and as such also central to the promotion of welfare. What we would like to emphasize is the need for theorizing rather than evaluating welfare and to look at how public discourse differs from individual experience. From a macro-political perspective, welfare is about planning for the good life, and about promising better futures for a population and a society. Political welfare projects often build on an idea of delimited time periods in which help from the state or another kind of organization reaches into the future until a certain point when intervention is not needed anymore. But from the perspective of the individual, to fare well is not necessarily a matter of reaching the aims or the standards of the state, but of being able to look forward and envision and realize a good life built on standards other than political. In other words, from a political perspective, welfare means reaching defined norms for a good life; for the individual faring well is a process that spans the whole of his or her life and may or may not lead towards the same standards.

The four excerpts from our research show how people create visions of the future in or-

der to try and fulfil the striving for a better life. In the Brazilian example Leo's imagining of the future is generated through a person-to-person contact: Wellington becomes a role model who inspires Leo to imagine another possible future. In Uganda when Abola's family links to faring well decline, he envisions the future in more abstract ways – as 'a hope for the new', but with less concrete milestones than in the case of Leo. In Georgia the young men without work do not believe in the future. The focus in their group is on a here-and-now survival. In Denmark the welfare state produces dominating discourses of possible futures and social workers and institutions work for the fulfilment of these ideals. But the welfare state only operates within a given time period, and in spite of lots of practical support it is not able to provide a stable picture of the future.

In all of these four examples well-faring is about ways of guiding yourself towards a better future. In order to explore how people act in relation to well-faring it is thus necessary to explore how time is interpreted. The different time maps people use for navigating are created from interplays between dominant discourses and individual relations. The possible routes people imagine and take towards the future are good indicators of well-faring in a given society, and there is, as Das (2006) might put it, a signature of the state in the way people envision their future.

Understanding what well-faring means for the individual is then a question of analysing the different possible futures imagined and approached. 'The future' does not form one but many possible routes to fare. Futures are imagined in the present and will always be visions, hypotheses with an element of uncertainty, not least for young people positioned at the margins of society. There is, as seen in our examples, vast variation and many complex scenarios to imagine. The future may seem threatening, promising, distant, abstract, enchanting (Adams and Groves 2007; Mische 2009). Our point is that the different cogni-

tive maps (Mische 2009) of the future are not merely individually produced but thoroughly intertwined with societal structures. We have found an inspiring set of concepts for thinking about well-faring in Ingold's distinctions between map-using and way-finding as two ways of moving through time and space (2000). In relation to an analysis of welfare, a structural, 'map-using' perspective might focus on how systems attempt to 'transport' the population towards reaching defined goals of welfare in the future. The dynamic 'way-finding' perspective we have taken also focuses on how individuals take action themselves to find their way to where they aim to go. This might include making use of the map and 'transportation system'/welfare structures available: how people 'get on the train' and how they move within the train themselves, or how they might decide not to get on the train or experience that the train does not stop at their station.

Conclusion

Welfare studies in anthropology are not very well established and theorized, and the existing sociological field is mainly discussing (macro) issues as social exclusion, economy, state, institutions and policy. The focus of current welfare ethnographies tends to stress the narratives produced by suppressed citizens. In this article we have argued for the development of a double perspective of well-faring including a temporal process of faring. With this perspective it becomes obvious that welfare research is not only about welfare states and policies or about the well-being of individuals, but about how people act in relation to their social conditions, cultural expectations and possibilities, seeking to fare well through life.

With this double, temporal perspective of faring well we have seen how being young and marginalized from 'the good life' in various societal contexts always interplays with

individual and social striving to create the best possible conditions for a future life.

Susanne Højlund is an associate professor in Anthropology at the Institute of Culture and Society, Aarhus University, Denmark. She has done several fieldworks in Danish children's institutions and published books and papers about childhood, welfare, social identity, hominess, institutionalization and methodology. E-mail: etnosh@hum.au.dk

Lotte Meinert is an associate professor in Anthropology at the Institute of Culture and Society, Aarhus University. She is the author of *Hopes in Friction: Schooling, Health and Everyday Life in Uganda* (2009) (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing). She has conducted fieldwork and published about health, schooling, AIDS and hope in Uganda since 1994. E-mail: etnolm@hum.au.dk

Martin Demant Frederiksen is External Lecturer at the Department of Anthropology, University of Aarhus, Denmark. He has conducted several fieldworks in the Republic of Georgia between 2005 and 2009 and published articles on a range of subjects such as temporality, social change, and youth and anthropological analysis. E-mail: etnmdf@hum.au.dk

Anne Line Dalsgaard is an associate professor in Anthropology at Aarhus University, Denmark. She is the author of *Matters of Life and Longing: Female Sterilisation in Northeast Brazil* (2004). Presently, she is conducting research on youth, poverty and futurity in Recife, northeast Brazil. E-mail: a.l.dalsgaard@hum.au.dk

Notes

1. We are inspired here by Das' idea about a 'double perspective'. Das argues 'to see the state as neither a purely rational-bureaucratic organization nor simply a fetish but as a form of regulation that oscillates between a rational mode and a magical mode of being' (2006: 162). We use the idea of a double perspective to theorize well-

faring in time from an interwoven individual and societal perspective.

2. The comparative research project *Futurity and Agency: Innovative Strategies among Marginalized Youth in Brazil, Uganda, Denmark, Georgia* is based at the Department of Anthropology and Ethnography at Aarhus University in Denmark. One of our intentions with this project is to use our empirical material to discuss and challenge some of the dogmas often applied to young marginalized people, in particular the idea that they have a hopeless future with a high risk of reproducing negative life chances. By trying to grasp the view of the youth themselves, we seek to identify some of the strategies they use to overcome a risky and uncertain future. The project is funded by the Danish Council for Independent Research.

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